

Eva Gabor has been entertaining audiences for 40 years and is fondly remembered from the film *Gigi* to her classic TV series *Green Acres*. She's back on the big screen reprising her role as the voice of mouse Miss Bianca in the new Disney cartoon *The Rescuers Down Under*.

The exuberant actress talked exclusively to Paul Fischer whilst taking a break from her vacation in Atlantic City.

The Hungarian accent on the other end of the phone had an all too familiar ring to it. Ebullient, warm, gracious and enthusiastic are words that can easily describe Eva Gabor - actress, movie star, raconteur and businesswoman - all rolled up into one package. Don't make the mistake of confusing her with sister Zsa Zsa or she'll get very upset. "I love her dearly but I'm an actress; I'm not interested in all the publicity nonsense."

The two might sound familiar, but that is where the similarities end. Eva Gabor has been acting on Broadway, film and television since the mid-1940s and is passionate about what she does. "I wanted to be an actress all my life ever since I was four years old." But success didn't come easy to the Hungarian emigre who says laughingly that "I didn't get discovered at a drug store or anywhere else."

Reflecting on a career than began in the mid-forties, Gabor ponders that she worked hard and ultimately paid her dues. "I studied and worked very hard before playing in every theatre in this country and I adore it, even today." Professionally, she began her career under contract to Paramount Studios where she studied for two years, "but of course I didn't get a picture." She changed studios, went to Twentieth Century Fox and even there failed to get a film. "They couldn't place me because I was so different."

Eva then decided to put Hollywood on hold for the moment; she moved to New York and was introduced to television. Overnight, she "became the hottest number in New York." She made her Broadway debut

Eva To The Rescue

AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH
EVA GABOR

as the ingenue in *Happy Tim* and continued to work in the theatre in such shows as *Blythe Spirit*, *Present Laughter* and *Tovarich*. Her film career also took off in the late fifties with such movies as *Gigi*, *Don't Go Near The Water*, *It Started With A Kiss* and *A New Kind Of Love*, but it was a new TV series called *Green Acres*, which ran from 1965-71, that made Eva Gabor an even bigger star.

"At the time I was doing a play and every young girl in Hollywood was testing for that role, because it was originally written for an average American girl. They then asked me to come out and test. I decided that I wanted to be different from the other girls, which is how that character became so kooky. So I

created that crazy lady; the producers asked me if I'd been to a farm, and I said, "Once". They asked me what I wore and I said my negligee and for that reason I was in negligees for six years!" Could she relate to Lisa Douglas? "In one way I am like her in that I can't cook; I burnt a pot the other day trying," she laughs.

Following the cancellation of that series, Eva continued to specialise in theatre and the occasional film, but for her biggest film successes, audiences heard, but did not see the actress. Her first Disney film was *The Aristocats*, where she lent her voice to a beautiful white cat. "Without a doubt Disney is my favourite studio and we enjoyed a great romance." Her unselfish commitment to her work put her in

good stead with the studio, who invited her back to play Miss Bianca in *The Rescuers*, a character very much modelled on herself. "It's so fascinating to see that this little mouse becomes you. It has every one of my gestures and inflections. It's incredible."

There's no doubt that Eva really loves the character of Miss Bianca, a role which she reprises in the new *Rescuers Down Under*. "She's such a lovely character, because she's so feminine and at the same time completely bossy, much like me."

She had no trouble drifting back into her old character for the sequel, which she describes as "utterly charming". For her, it's perfect family fun. "I hate all of the violence that we see on the screen these days. I want to be entertained and these Disney movies do that perfectly."

Eva is a bit jealous that Bianca managed to head to Australia minus the actress, but in her feminine/bossy way, she intends to remedy that. "I'm going to ring Disney straight away and insist they send me over to help promote the film." By the time this interview is published, The inimitable Miss Gabor may well have been here relating a myriad of stories from a fascinating and fortunate life.

Though she is enjoying the success of *Rescuers Down Under*, she is more than just an actress these days. She owns one of the largest and most profitable wig companies in the world, an achievement that has made her one of America's wealthiest women. She need never have to work as an actress ever again, but scoffs at the notion. "I still love it. In fact, I hope to be reviving the play *Tovarich* later this year with John Forsyth."

Truly, Eva Gabor is a star still shining bright and there are none quite like her. No doubt, this warm and gracious actress, who has provided audiences with so much pleasure for almost 50 years, will continue to do so for many more years to come.

The Rescuers Down Under is about to be released theatrically in Australia. The original Rescuers, is scheduled for release on video in August.

